



CALHOUN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

190 E. Michigan Avenue, Ste. A100 Phone: (269) 969-6370
Battle Creek, Michigan 49014 Fax: (269) 966-1489

- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - July 29, 2010

Contact person:
Brigette Reichenbaugh (269) 969-6366

Health Department Recommends Evacuation of Residents

The Calhoun County Public Health Department is recommending immediate evacuation of residents directly affected in and around the site of the Kalamazoo River Oil Spill. This area affects approximately 30 – 50 homes North and Northwest of the oil spill site.

Clearly identified Calhoun County Health Department and Michigan Department of Community Health officials and volunteers will personally visit those homes affected to deliver notices of recommended evacuation.

The Health Department is recommending evacuation due to the high than acceptable levels of Benzene found in air quality tests and the adverse long-term affect associated with exposure. Benzene is a chemical that is a colorless or light yellow liquid at room temperature. It has a sweet odor and is highly flammable. People who breathe in high levels of benzene may develop the following signs and symptoms: drowsiness, dizziness, rapid or irregular heartbeat, headaches, tremors, confusion, or unconsciousness.

The long-term effects of Benzene exposure is on the blood. Benzene causes harmful effects on the bone marrow and can cause a decrease in red blood cells, leading to anemia. It can also cause excessive bleeding and can affect the immune system, increasing the chance for infection. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has determined that benzene causes cancer in humans. Long-term exposure to high levels of benzene in the air can cause leukemia, cancer of the blood-forming organs.

Long-term air monitoring will continue indefinitely.

Volunteers are securing hotel rooms and arranging shelter locations for residents and pets. Residents will be notified of shelter locations and available hotels once they receive their evacuation notice.

Evacuated residents are asked to save all receipts for expenses incurred as a result of this evacuation. Evacuees will be reimbursed by Enbridge.

For questions, please call the Enbridge Oil Spill Hotline at (800) 306-6837 or the Public Health Department at (269) 969-6341.

For more information about Benzene, visit <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/benzene/basics/facts.asp>

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